

Erastus Fairbanks

Resistance to Slavery every Man's Duty.

A

REPORT

ON

AMERICAN SLAVERY,

READ TO THE

WORCESTER CENTRAL ASSOCIATION,

MARCH 2, 1847.

BOSTON:

WM. CROSBY & H. P. NICHOLS,

No. 111 Washington Street.

1847.

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ANDREWS AND PRENTISS, PRINTERS,
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AT a stated meeting of the WORCESTER CENTRAL ASSOCIATION, holden at Princeton, May 4, 1847, it was voted, *unanimously*,—"That, in the opinion of this Association, a REPORT on the subject of AMERICAN SLAVERY, presented by the REV. GEORGE ALLEN,* contains facts, arguments and illustrations worthy of the consideration of all the friends of humanity; and, that, in order to promote the dissemination of its truths, the Association request him to publish the same, in such form as he may deem most suitable."

S. G. BUCKINGHAM, *Scribe.*

* Mr. A., as Chairman of a Committee of the Association, presented the Report at their meeting, in Worcester, March 2, 1847.

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R E P O R T.

AMERICAN SLAVERY cannot be contemplated with indifference by a mind honest to itself and true to its God. Its character is too marked and significant, its action is too broad and deep, its consequences are both too near and too remote not to awaken earnest thought and deep emotion when clearly and steadily seen, when truly and justly known.

We affect towards it no indifference. We conceal not, but deliberately avow and seek to publish wide, our more than dislike to its character, our conviction of its wrong and danger, our opposition to its declared purpose, our solicitude for the nation that harbors it, our dread of its unresisted operation, our sense of duty as Christian ministers, and our conviction of the duty of all men to expose its character, to stay its progress, and to destroy its being, in humble reliance on Him whose providence calls to effort, and whose promise gives assurance of success to timely and faithful endeavors.

In expressing our thoughts on a subject of permanent and general interest we would, as far as possible, lose sight of personal, party and sectional considerations, influenced by no meaner motive than duty, no

narrower wish than the good of all. And yet, in speaking of Slavery, we shall not hesitate to speak of what, of where, and whose it is. No sensitiveness or jealousy from any quarter, on such a subject, may overrule our sense of duty or dictate to us its limits. Careful to say only that which is just, and which cannot justly be withheld, we shall use such a freedom as the theme and its interests seem to us to require. With no further apology for the substance or manner of our remarks, we proceed to consider some of the many reasons why the Christian public, and especially Christian ministers should, from time to time, bear individual and united testimony against American Slavery.

As general principles are the great teachers of specific character and duty, we shall state them, as occasion may justify, in the progress of our remarks. And as a first principle,— All sin is danger; sometimes only to him who does it, but generally working evil beyond its perpetrator. Whatever sin men are tempted to commit needs to be spoken against, for precaution, reproof or remedy. While the sin exists, or the temptation to do it exists, it is not safe to leave it to itself. To be silent respecting it is to encourage its commission. Sins which are in their nature great, which are widely prevalent, and which have been long perpetrated by general consent—sins which have connected themselves with many and large worldly interests—sins which have received the respect of custom, the sanction of law, and the veneration of time—sins which have been framed into the public policy and solemnly educated into the public morals,—sins which have become wonted at the hearth and the altar of the common home, are not, for any or all of

these reasons, exempt from the law of God, and should not be from the condemnation of those whose duty is to declare that law. On the contrary, such sins most need to be spoken of plainly, rebuked boldly, and resisted constantly, so long as the wrong is done, or the danger of doing it abides. Such sins have great need to be spoken against by all, but most of all by those on whom the public most rely to expose and rebuke all other sins.

It is by no means true that the most monstrous vices are therefore the most hated. Nay, it is but too often the case that their magnitude is their immunity. Their wide prevalence not only makes them feel secure, but arrogates for them the qualities of virtue. Magnificent sins win magnificent advocates. The three which, where idolatry is not, most offend God and most molest man — Intemperance, War, and Slavery — have had and yet have their strenuous advocates, their gifted champions.

It is not always that the magnitude of a crime, the mass of evils which it constantly inflicts on human interests of every kind, nor the long period of its outrage, most convinces its perpetrators or its sufferers that it is a sin, that its enormities both provoke and execute the judgments of Heaven, and that, to escape from the dire effect, it is necessary first to abandon the cause. Education, intimacy, habits, blind the understanding, subdue conscience, harden the heart.

Great immediate sinful interests are of themselves great powers, and they command great influences beyond themselves in their own wicked behalf. They buy up genius and learning and station and even virtue itself, to gild the foulest crime, to perplex honest minds, and to uphold what, but for these allies,

would fall by the pressure of indignant common sense. The auxiliaries which great sins gather around them they delegate to such quarters and advance to such posts as will most honor and best defend that which most needs to be unsparingly denounced and resolutely overborne.

These truths, manifest in many ways, were conspicuous in the African Slave Trade, when the world looked on that vast and horrid tragedy with more than cold acquiescence — with well satisfied complacency — till the honest, resolute consciences of a few humble individuals set themselves to work for its destruction. That crime is now held by the civilized world in abhorrence, and they who mercilessly barter for men in the groaning shambles of Africa, are, by the consent of nations, cut off from the protection of society, and from the common blessings of that humanity themselves have abandoned. And yet it is but a few years, since the most enlightened and — shall we say it? — the most Christianized government of Europe was jealous of any, even the most cautious interference with the crime it had so long allowed, regulated and protected. Then that monstrous and shocking barbarity was defended on principles — was advocated not merely for the man-stealer and the buyer of stolen men, but for the sake of the writhing and desolate victim himself! In the highest places of secular power, and in the holy heights of spiritual lordship, that enormity was upheld and canonized, while the meek but resolute spirit, who felt bound and therefore dared to speak for God and man, was in danger of his life, for no other cause than his intrepid obedience to Heaven, and active good-will to earth. At that juncture virtues and all manner of interests were sum-

moned to the common rally to rescue the African Slave Trade from incipient peril. Then, as now, in common esteem, the life of England was her navy, and the prosperity of England, her commerce; and it was strenuously urged, to the conviction and alarm of many patriotic and intelligent minds, that “the suppression of the African Slave Trade would destroy a great nursery for seamen, and annihilate a very considerable source of commercial prosperity.” And yet it was conclusively proved by Clarkson, 1st., that “so far from being a nursery, it had been constantly and regularly a grave for British seamen;” and that, “in this traffic only, more men perished in one year, than in all the other trades of Great Britain in two years:” and 2d, that “the balance of trade, from its extreme precariousness and uncertainty, was so notoriously against the merchant, that if all the vessels were the property of one man, he would infallibly, at the end of their voyages, find himself a loser.”

Such is a specimen of the delusions with which great sins, connected with immediate pecuniary interests or with ambitious hopes, strive to sustain themselves against the claim of truths divinely written in the constitution of nature, and clearly expounded in the steady providence of God:—and it is only a specimen. Slowly and by dim degrees the most needed enterprises of beneficence ascend to their proper station in the eyes of mankind.

Nor is the effort to sustain life, of American Slavery, that vast felony on man, unlike the desperation of its now infamous parent, the African Slave Trade. Till within a few years the nation has acquiesced in its crime and curse, with scarcely an audible murmur against its atrocity. As the mischief grew, it grew strong to

repress the occasional uprisings of manly sentiment, and to hold it dishonored in the dust. It grew bold by success, and by the fear it had wrought on free minds. While it threatened, it promised; and the nation slept in the hush of a false hope. But though man was asleep, the providence of God was awake to disturb his guilty repose, till at last the conscience of the nation is drowsily getting up and beginning to feel somewhat alarmed at the guilt and misery it has profoundly slumbered over, and is nearly virtuous enough to blush at the dishonor, the growing infamy, of a crime pointed at, by scornful hands, from every quarter of the globe.

In such an hour of danger, Slavery is, of course, alive to its new necessity, and its stoutest and most keen-eyed champions hurry to the towers of its citadel. Though the common sense of mankind has always been suspicious of Slavery, and though many of the world's wisest men in all ages have frowned on it, in the forum, in the schools of philosophic truth, in the faithful record of history, and in the graceful wisdom of song, and though the strong spirit of revelation is instinct with its rebuke, it has always been surrounded by devoted friends equally earnest to conceal its deformity and apologise for its manifest shame. Like the African Slave Trade, ruinous to the mass and gainful only to the few of its adventurers, so American Slavery, the mildew and blasting of the many, and the sad prosperity of but a handful of the people where most it flourishes, is, in its time of trouble and felt necessity, more anxious than ever for life, and more studious than ever of pretexts, to disguise its real character. Not to be in repute is to die, for no crime can survive the condemnation of the

world. To protect Slavery it seems to have become necessary to eulogize it with bold and confident praise. In proportion to the growing sense of its wrong must be the earnestness and decision of its vindicated honor. Till of late, the defence of American Slavery, in answer to the few who modestly questioned its right, was,—“It is a helpless legacy from other generations—an involuntary evil brought into and kept in the Colonies while under a transatlantic crown—a mild disease to be patiently borne with by that part of the body on which it is seated, and to be uncared for and wholly let alone by the rest of the body.” But of late, since the whole system begins to feel its darting pains, and the remoter limbs begin to fear its progress to vital organs, and when the subject of the malady is learning from the sure remedy abroad that the disease may be cured at home, the apologists for Slavery have become its sturdy advocates, and have set up doctrines in its defence, new, startling, and audacious beyond the foresight of dreams.

Strange and incredible as it may have seemed to most, it is nevertheless true—a melancholy truth—that Slavery, once content with plausible excuses for an acknowledged evil, has, of a sudden, started up, in high quarters, into the boldest and most assuming attitude of defence, and with defiant claim, in its behalf, of right and duty and benevolence! It has even come to this, that Slavery is extolled as an institution of pre-eminent wisdom and worth, to be cherished, extended, and perpetuated for the greatest good of its victims, and as the safeguard of general liberty, the nurse of magnanimous honor, and the source of the most affluent happiness!

When a minor sin, though it have no other defence than its practice, is abroad, few, except its perpetrators and their accomplices, will deny that it should be spoken against, and be arrested by the public hand. What, then, is duty when the most flagrant and the most comprehensive trespass on God's law and man's rights is denied to be sinful, is deliberately advocated on principle, is openly defended as a divine right, is recommended as a great public blessing, is extolled as a high attainment of moral and political wisdom, and enjoined as an imperative duty? When this turning of things upside down is done before the nation and the world, by learned civilians, by sage moralists, and by eminent statesmen in the robe and authority of exalted office, is it not doubly due to the country and the world, that such heresies against God and man be repelled, by theory and by practice — by all such lawful means as will tend most effectually to undo the mischief of learned and official imposture, and to give universal practical effect to truths in which all men have by nature the deepest concern?

We could wish that no man, and especially that no public man, stood in the way of truth, for then would he not stand in our way in its defence. But the claims of truth are paramount to the claims of men, be they who or where they may. In justice to her claims, and in justice to ourselves as her ministers, we cannot say less than that such doctrines are unworthy of their high source, and only show that intimacy with wrong, education to wrong, and deep interest in wrong, can bring down exalted wisdom to the depths of folly, and mingle the sternest inhumanity with noble and generous sympathies.

To meet, then, the question in its present aspect before the country and the world, we now ask,— What is American Slavery?— and what, in regard to it, are the duties claimed of Heaven from ministers of the Gospel, from all disciples of its Great Teacher— nay, from all who have the faculties and means which make obligation?

We must try the character of Slavery, and duty in regard to it, as we should try any other question of character and duty. To judge justly of the character of anything, we must know what it does. That which is good, does good; and that which is evil, evil. And as to duty, God's designs indicate his claims. That which accomplishes the manifest design of God is right; that which counteracts it, wrong. Whatever, in its proper tendency and general effect, produces, secures or extends human welfare is according to the will of God and is good; and our duty is to favor and promote, according to our power, that which God favors and promotes by the general law of his providence. On the other hand, whatever, in its proper tendency and general effect, destroys, abridges, or renders insecure human welfare, is opposed to God's will, and is evil. And as whatever accords with the will of God, in any manifestation of it, should be done and persisted in, so whatever opposes that will should not be done, and, if done, should be abandoned.

Can that, then, be right, be well-doing— can that obey God's behest, which makes a **MAN** a **SLAVE**?— which dooms him and all his posterity, in limitless generations, to bondage?— to unrequited toil, through life?— to the will of a despot, with no purpose of his own, and only another's to rule his destiny from the cradle to the grave?— which makes fear the great

motive of his life? — which forbids his interest in property, of every kind, making the hope of to-morrow no object of to-day, or, if an object at all, one that the fear of another's arbitrary and capricious will makes next to none? — which allows him no country in whose government he can hope for protection — none whose government, as judicially construed, is not his sworn foe? — which denies him, in childhood, manhood and old age, a voluntary home, and whatever that full word imports? — which cuts him off from parentage at his birth? — which robs him of the fixed necessities of his social nature, abrogating domestic relations, and forbidding the comfort and solace of wife or children, whatever may betide him in this rugged world? — which makes the body liable, without distinction of sex, to the restless, questionless inflictions of a master's or an overseer's whims and cultivated passions? — which famishes the soul, seeking to keep the mind ever vacant of its proper nourishment, and to hold its unmanned possessor but a step, the shortest possible, from the brute? — which takes from him the commonest motives to virtue, and rears on the whole foundation of his nature urgent and lasting incentives to vice? — which makes him suspected by, and suspicious of, those for whom he is daily driven to toil, and on whom, for his coarse allowance of provender he every day depends? — which tempts him to prowling stealth, and to pilfer, as a virtue when not detected, from his master's store, the earnings of his own unpaid toil? — which incites him to acquire the longed-for boon of freedom by venturing through the most merciless dangers, or to vindicate his right to it by the broadest seal of blood? — which represses the upward aspirings of his nature for immortality,

making a sensual world the sphere and boundary of his vision? — which keeps from his hands the Word of Life, yields to him a reluctant, uncertain, unspiritual sabbath, and all but wholly leaves him without hope and without God in the world?

Can that ruined, empty condition, or the liability to such ruin and vacuity, by arbitrary power of a fellow mortal be right and good — the manifest design of God in the formation and endowments of a **MAN**, a being not only mortal, but **IMMORTAL**? Can that be right and good, be true to God and just to man, which, for no crime against Heaven, no offence to earth but the helpless, unmoral color of the skin — perhaps an undistinguishable and only presumed shade — dooms a *single individual* of our species to such a combination of outrages on his being? — which takes even *one brother* of our family to lop and sear, to kill and bury his manhood? — which, defacing the image wherein he was created, sinks him as near brutality as can make him that contradiction to nature, a profitable, contented Slave, and then proves, by the depth of his forced degradation, his incapacity to be a man — his doom of God to be a Slave?

And if such ruin, or the exposure to such ruin of but *one* man, of but *one* brother, is not right, is displeasing to God, then how wrong, how offensive to Heaven must be that system which so crushes millions of human beings at once, and multiplies its millions of victims along the track of ages! What words can tell the inhumanity, the atrocity of that doctrine which, from exalted office, commends such a crime to the favor of Christian nations, as the deliberate counsel and practical wisdom of a great and enlightened Christian republic! What indignation from all the

world is not due to the government that puts forth its strength to protect and extend such barbarity ! Nature abhors it ; the age repels it ; and Christianity needs all her meekness to forgive it.

But does any one say that our picture of Slavery is dark, and that we have relieved it by no light ? It is our purpose to present the shade, and, if possible, the darkness that may be felt. He who shall show the light will show that which is foreign from the shade and its cause — that which is adventitious to Slavery, and not its own attribute or effect. But our picture is not done, and, though we would gladly forbear, we must copy yet further the sombre original.

He who makes man his victim sacrifices himself. Our present subject cannot dispute this axiom. We must, then, look for the character of Slavery and the will of God respecting it, beyond, as well as within, itself. If that which works evil to the Slave works evil to the master also, then are there two witnesses cited by Providence to testify against it and establish its delinquency. Keeping in memory, then, the injury done to the Slave, let us now examine that which it inflicts on the master, and decide whether that system accords with the will of God which works evil to all concerned.

Right theory is but the teaching of facts known, to illustrate facts either not known or questioned. To a careful mind theory is often as sure a teacher as facts, and he who is not wiser by theory is not apt to be wise in any other way. In some cases where the question of fact is a question of personal interest, or bias of any kind, theory convinces, or aids to convince, when facts alone fail to produce conviction.

Can, then, that be good for either party, which makes the greatest possible difference between man and man—the extremes of power and weakness, of dependence and prerogative? Is it not, in this world, the nature of great power, irresponsible in proportion to its greatness, to abuse that which is in its power? And is it not a virtue higher than the common level of human character, that is not tempted to abuse absolute sovereignty? Or is it less certain that abuse begets resentment, and resentment resistance? The history of despotism is the history of wrong and retribution. Not to know this is not to know common truth. Every declaration of rights, all the checks and balances which wisdom, conversant with the nature and history of man, has solicitously inwrought into the Constitutions of the several States, and into the Constitution of the United States, are joint testimony that power unchecked by power will work evil to, and make an enemy of, its subject. There is in nature, and must be, for its defence and preservation, uncompromising enmity between wrong-doing, and wrong-suffering. This constant, inherent opposition will impress itself against the doer of evil, for the relief of its sufferer, while there is right government on earth or in heaven. These principles, applicable to all other despotism, are not less applicable to a plantation than to an empire. The house of bondage is the house of plagues, not more by the miracles of Providence than by its settled law. Had we, then, not a single fact respecting American Slavery but its existence and what it does to its immediate victim, it would still be safe to infer, and an abuse of common understanding not to infer, that so much evil to the Slave

must work out no small recompense of evil to him who dares to be his owner.

But we are not without facts, many and authentic, which speak with emphasis of the retribution as well as the crime of Slavery. Our position even here, so near the eastern horizon of freedom, cannot hide from us these facts. They concern our country, and therefore concern us: they concern humanity, and are therefore our concern. They come to us from those who are of us, in whose knowledge and probity we have the best right to confide; but not alone from them. We have facts, many and most impressive, for which we are not indebted to witnesses whom local jealousy might suspect, but to eminent jurists, statesmen and divines, at home in the midst of Slavery, and participators in what they have seen and described. We will not fatigue our readers by repeating oft cited testimony, but will rather imply its various substance in further questions respecting the alledged right, benefit, and duty to preserve and extend the institution of Slavery.

Can, then, that system be good for him who is concerned in it, and therefore be wisely allowed, cherished and enlarged, which, giving nearly unlimited irresponsible power over a fellow man, body and soul, for life, makes it necessary, for him who is so concerned, to be educated to its strenuous necessities, to its imperious use and stern excision of sympathy? — which, to maintain an adverse relation and make it either profitable or safe, compels him to exact by fear, and by that which makes fear, the task which, without fear as its main-spring, would neither be done nor begun? — Can that system, parcel or part, be good for him who uses it, which coercing labor

and taking away its proper stimulus, makes it shiftless and thriftless, unprogressive in its meagre skill, and without motive or tendency to improvement by him who yields his sweat for another's bread? — Can that system help him who relies upon it, which tends to his own inaction from want of motive to effort, and which for the security of Slavery by the degradation of the Slave, makes even the most needful industry disreputable except for a Slave, and thus offers the tempting bounty of honor to idleness? — Can that system be fraught with blessings, or be less than a grievous curse, to its dependent, which, while it abridges industry and her rich rewards, not less abridges mind, the richest capital of man? — which makes general education so difficult as to be next to impossible and practically hopeless? — which, by the mighty impotence of idleness and ignorance, seals up vast resources of nature, stints the useful and the liberal arts, locks up navigation and commerce with the rigor of a ceaseless blockade, and thus brands its own forehead with the deep impress of sin, while pertinaciously unconscious of the guilt? Can that system ask the smile of Heaven or man, which most unkindly frowns on the very earth God made good for man? — that system which, in addition to the other evil it does and the other good it both hinders and destroys, settles down on a soil made exuberant by ages of fertilization, and with rapid zeal converts it to a desolate waste, compelling its owner to forsake it for his life, though, before Slavery had wrought it sterile, it bloomed and teemed with the assurance of perpetual plenty? Can that fulfill the law of God and claim the reward of well-doing, which, abrogating chastity in the Slave, invites impurity in the master, and records the fact in

the faces of so many of his own progeny doomed for the mother's skin to Slavery in all their generations? Can that be Heaven's gift and man's gain, which not only hinders property, but renders every species of it insecure? — which perils life, and most breeds danger where safety is most coveted? — which, when it lies down to sleep on its lordly couch, invokes the protection of the pistol and the bowie knife? — which guards the city from midnight fire by a military patrol, and which makes one half of all the people safe, if safe at all, only by keeping the one part armed and the other weaponless, lest the impatient spirit of liberty assert its fixed prerogative by the terrors of indiscriminate slaughter?

Our questions, in either series, have been only general, and yet without exhausting such. In their species and vast variety they would be an ever-coming multitude. Our brief interrogative description is imperfect both in and beyond its brevity. Nothing but the pen of Providence, in the hand of Slavery itself, can do justice to its character. It is the never defeated purpose of God to make the blackest crime write the blackest curse and wear it as a badge of infamy wherever it stalks over this world's rights and interests.

But imperfect as our sketch may be, what is it as it is? Is it not true in its parts? Is it not altogether true? And if true, how great must be the guilt which such truth but dimly describes. How false to God and man to commend it, to uphold it, to encourage it, to connive at it, to apologise for it, to disguise it, to be silent respecting it, or to do anything but make it everywhere hated and everywhere forsaken. How reprehensible must be any state or nation that harbors such a crime. How inexpressibly guilty, not merely

to harbor, but to cherish and enlarge it, must be that nation, whose independence was achieved, in the name of **LIBERTY**, by long and bloody war, with devout appeal to Heaven for the rectitude of its cause, with careful manifesto to the nations of the earth of violated rights, and with solemn pledge of "life, fortune and sacred honor," to vindicate the "self-evident truths" that "all men are created free and equal," and that "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" are their "unalienable rights." How perverse and false that Government whose Constitution teaches, in its first great lesson, its purpose "TO SECURE THE BLESSINGS OF LIBERTY," and yet whose administration diplomatically extols, practically extends, and anxiously endeavors to perpetuate **THE EVILS OF SLAVERY**.

Does any one say, does any one think, that, because this vast moral subject involves political and party considerations, religion should abandon it, and the ministers of religion eschew it, as profane? Politics and party, if they covet, cannot have, the monopoly of morals. They can neither dispossess our minds of truth, our hearts of sympathy, nor our consciences of obligation. When Slavery has left such a victim stripped and weltering on the highway of the world, it is not fit that the Samaritan, it is most of all unfit that the priest and the levite, should look on and pass by on the other side. The demand that ministers of religion keep aloof from this subject, vital to morals, is the demand, not of freedom, but of Slavery. It was not so when the American Colonies put on their revolutionary armor in defence of liberty. Then the Continental Congress called upon "ministers of all denominations" to aid them in maintaining the natural, equal and unalienable rights of "ALL MEN." Then

the ministry were zealous, of themselves, and the response forewent the call. But now, when millions of our brethren are groaning under an iron bondage, and the oppressor is riveting anew their shackles, and enlarging their vast prison-house for other millions of captives, how tardy, how reluctant is the voice they wait for with the sickness of hope deferred. The inaction, the want of earnestness, the cold delay of churches and ministers, have been, and to a melancholy extent yet are, reprehensible ; and the mildest truth, that can wisely reprove such delinquency is, that nothing can make it safe but undelayed and practical repentance.

And why has there been for so long a period, why yet is there to so large an extent, among churches and ministers, a seeming if not a real apathy — a want of decisive interposition in behalf of millions of their countrymen whose condition and prospects claim their instant earnest regard — their united resolute efficiency ? Can it be for want of heart to feel, or will to do in the *general* cause of human welfare ? This is contradicted by too many decisive proofs to make it questionable except by scepticism of the will. But while their faith and zeal thread gloomy wilds to reclaim the roving savage, while they explore the wretchedness of far off continents and scan the misery of lonely islets dotting the Pacific waste, while they thus traverse the globe in enterprises of love, which difficulties seem only to carry forward with more abundant resolution and success, how happens it that a victim of oppression, helpless and wailing, lies neglected at their very door, though half that faith and zeal would, years gone by, have circumscribed his growing wrongs, and, at this very moment, would

have seen his fetters broken, his manhood lifted from the dust, and a guilty nation joyful in the common deliverance?

To answer faithfully this question may be, in some quarters, to speak unwelcome truth, that more needs to be spoken for any love of darkness. We are not unaware that not every truth needs utterance, and that some truths need concealment. The duty to speak depends, often, on the probable or the proper use and effect of what may be spoken. Whatever principle or fact intimately pertains to any great public interest suffering much from error in respect to such fact or principle, much needs to be proclaimed with a plainness forbidding misapprehension. They who mislead, and they who are misled should, if possible, be made to understand and feel that which is best fitted to arrest their misgoings. The subject, the time, if not all subjects and all time, claim the open truth in respect to the inconsistency and guilty omission which our question regards. What though wrong-headed benevolence or wrong-hearted malignity may aggravate that which in its real dimensions is too large to be seemly? What though their vicious appetite may gloat over the failings of men whose virtues they might profitably imitate? What though hypocrisy and self-righteousness may pervert an honest confession, and abuse it into a pretext for scoffing at a religion which they hate even more than they do its teachers? If it be so, shall we, on that account, suppress our testimony or withhold our expression of regret respecting facts which concern a near and leading interest of humanity? Whatever pride or a skittish forecast may commend, our vocation says, give truth its due, and take its blessing.

Not, then, to waive or extenuate the true answer to the question, How happens that manifest contradiction, a ready, deep and constant concern, with willing sacrifices, for remote objects of need, and a fixed neglect of those at hand? — why this love of distant strangers whom we have not seen, and disregard of brethren at our side? — we answer, — **SLAVERY HAS PUT ITS HAND UPON THE CHURCH AND ITS MINISTRY.** This does, and nothing else can, reveal the mystery. This is the great controlling cause. Other agencies may mingle with it, but they are insufficient of themselves, and subordinate to this one as their master-spirit. If any are startled by our reply, we only ask them to consider calmly the reasons and facts we offer as the foundation on which rests the truth of our response.

Before giving the proposed proof, we think it due to the importance of the subject to guard against misapprehension, at a time when so many are willing to misapprehend. We do not mean to say that very many ministers have not, for years, rejoiced in opportunities to bear their testimony against Slavery and the sinfulness of upholding such a system by voluntary participation in it, or by any act signifying approval of it. Nor dare we say that any class of citizens who have publicly opposed that sin can bear comparison with that of the ministry, in proportion to their number, always excepting, and with abundant honor, the society of Friends. Nor yet do we question, that, of those whose delinquency we disapprove, there are many whose apparent is not a real indifference to the wrongs of the Slave or the guilt of their infliction. We have known of the prayerful solicitude of some, and doubt not that of many more not known to us, who conscientiously hesitated to act in public against

Slavery, from a mistaken apprehension of an effect injurious to the interests of the Slave — a misapprehension carefully wrought on many honest minds. But with all decent charitable abatement for any, it is not yet to be doubted of others, that a colder policy, a more temporizing expediency than is good and profitable to men, has had a full share of influence in suppressing the voice of the churches and of the ministry. Once more: when we speak of the power of Slavery, as above, we do not mean that those who have been under it have of course been conscious that it was over them, nor that the power, however great and sure of success, was direct and immediate in its control. That cause is, often, not the less effective whose immediate action is distant, unapparent, and therefore unsuspected. Its latent energy does what it could not do if manifest. With these precautions, we proceed to show, by presumptive evidence and by conspicuous facts, the truth of the alleged action of Slavery on the church and its ministry.

We have already spoken both of the weakness and the power of Slavery. If to any this looks like a contradiction, it is only like many other truths whose unity is real and conflict only seeming. The robust, not the infirm, are prodigal of health, and the weak often watch the death-beds of the mighty. The consciousness of strength has made Freedom careless of its value, while a sense of weakness has compelled Slavery to prize power above price. The one possesses and the other uses it. It is this difference that makes comparative weakness absolute power. When the sentinels of a strong city sleep at their posts, its watch-towers and bulwarks become the strength of its foe.

By unity of interest, by a sense of common danger, by a felt omnipresence of necessity, by a Constitutional concession of extra-suffrage to Slave States, and by that obedient popular ignorance which it creates to impose upon and to use, Slavery, itself a power, lays hold of greater power, alike by subtilty and by arrogant decision. In what sphere of influence is not its evil genius present and at work to molest freedom and to promote her own vicious interests? In what mart of commerce does she not win the love of gain? What wheel of frugal industry does not watch her humor to know when to whirl, and when to rust in idleness? What lust of office does not cringe and palter for her smile? What ambition, of whatever grade, is not diffident of itself till encouraged by her? What State does not consult her will and ask her leave to do its own? What is called the Nation's power is hers, in cabinet at home, in courts abroad. She presides over every department of its civil affairs. Its chief commanders, by land and sea, are her high captains. Its myriad of hungry dependants are her subalterns. Its legislation is her decree. Its temple of justice is her asylum. Its supreme executive sword glitters in her hand. Its navy thunders for her defence; and its armies muster for her battles. The Nation's revenue is hers, to lock up to-day and dissipate to-morrow. Principles are clay in her sovereign hand. The Constitution shrinks and expands, to fit the changes of her restless policy. She compromises morals by lines of latitude, absolves the faith of treaties by the edge of the sword, dismembers foreign States to piece out her cruel domain for present need, or buys them up, with the public treasure, to provide for the wants of prospective tyranny.

Having come thus far and wrought thus much, will that evil genius stop, of her own accord, at these limits? Will her hope falter at the sacred brink of an ecclesiastical Rubicon? A power that needs all power, that is quick to see and feel and help its need, will of course seek to grasp all power. Is the genius of Slavery exempt from this general law? From her success elsewhere may we not presume on her effrontery and success in places which should most repel her approach? Was there ever such a power on earth that did not take hold of religion? Not to suppose it is to forego common sense. Accordingly do we find that facts make good the presumption. In those States where she sits empress over the universe around her, and more unreservedly develops her nakedness, no place is too sacred for the intrusion of her feet, no thing too holy for her sacrilegious use, no minister of religion so consecrate to God as to feel safe without the imposition of her impious hand. The church is both her city of habitation and of refuge: its pulpits are her watch-towers, its ministers her sentinels: the Bible is her rule of arbitrary faith and practice: its patriarchal history is typical of her more perfect despotism: the prophecies foretell her happy days when there shall be no "prisoners of hope:" the gospel, not of redemption, but of captivity, is her glad-tidings to the poor; and even the blessed Redeemer, on whom was the Spirit of the Lord because he came to preach deliverance to the captives, is made the Great Teacher of Slavery, and the Chief Keeper of the house of bondage!

What we have here said of the sacrilegious intrusion and efficacy of the Slave-power in those States where it is most at home, is so true, that he who should there

venture to preach another gospel, would not be an uncertain candidate for the martyrdom of lynch-law. And something of what is comprehensively true in those States is not yet wholly untrue out of their limits. Not to have exerted our influence on them, is to have received theirs on ourselves. Intimacy never leaves men as it finds them, and that which does not purify, corrupts. The law of individuals is the law of communities, because the law of human nature.

Let the enquirer, then, going back to a period but a little way off, cast his eye to whatever quarter, and he will not miss the proof of a general stagnation of moral enterprise, and, apparently, of moral feeling, on the Slave question and its momentous concerns. In the free States, the religious not less than the secular press abhorred so much of the subject as favored the Slave, and countenanced that only which expressed the sentiments of the master. The schools of the prophets were alarmed at any life-like pulsations of sympathy for the Slave within their holy precincts, and young men in every stage of education for the ministry, had more moral courage than their teachers approved, if they dared to be suspected of an Anti-Slavery taint. The keeper of God's temple would not suffer such a leprosy to come even to the court of the Gentiles; and he who, at its holy altar, offered prayer for the deliverance of the Slave, to God who hateth oppression, found little favor and much contempt from the wise, the mighty, and the noble, though the common people had gladly mingled their intercession with his, but for influences which had been accustomed to go forward and not mislead them. Ecclesiastical bodies, the small and the great, were under the same pervading mastery. Associations, Presbyteries, Syn-

ods, General Assemblies, Classes, Conferences, and Conventions, all refused to make any, and carefully shunned every opportunity to bear testimony, even the gentlest and least offensive, against a crime which imbruted millions of their countrymen, and extinguished for them the light of immortality.

But who questions the truth of all this? And, if true, how came it so? Freedom could not do it. Her vocation and proper tendencies are opposite. Friendly to all other interests and enterprises of humanity, to them which are nigh, and them which are afar off, why not to this? An enemy hath done it: and the only enemy that has or can have a motive to stifle the voice that would speak in behalf of the oppressed, is the oppressor. The churches and the ministry were under an influence foreign from themselves, because adverse to their principles and habits. And whose was it, if not Slavery's? To do what it ever desires, and demands, and threatens for not doing, and to leave undone what it imperiously forbids, and, especially, to do and leave undone *such* things, in accordance with its interests and claims, and in disregard of the claims and interests of humanity, can it be less than proof, to any honest mind, that the hand of Slavery has pressed hard on whatever has so done and so refrained from doing?

True, the church and ministry were not alone in their delinquency. It was as if the Nation had been stunned into forgetfulness of itself. The whole head was sick, and the whole heart faint. Clear-sighted jurists and statesmen were bewildered and backslidden into loose and miry abstractions. Then the doctrine flew all abroad, that the people of the Free States had, by solemn compact, shut their mouths forever, against

themselves and in behalf of Slavery, though now not a tittle of such compact is dreamed of by any reputable interpreter of Constitutional law. Then, even in this free Commonwealth, were we taught by eminent legal authority, and by the official monitory voice of a learned and wary chief magistrate, that to agitate the question of Slavery and to publish such sentiments against it as all now feel free to utter, was libellous, seditious, traitorous—an offence against the majesty of the people, indictable by the common law! What but Slavery could so stultify the first principles of civil liberty? And if Slavery was the master-spirit to stretch over Law the “line of confusion,” why not over the Gospel “the stones of emptiness?”

But, blessed be God, the darkness of that night is past, and the day-star itself has faded in the brightness of the morning sky. And, yet, there are cold vales down which truth has but darkly shined, and where enquirers even now grope their way with uncertain issue. Some of their doubts and difficulties we will here consider.

It is asked, by some who acknowledge the great wrong of Slavery, and who are taught so to ask,—“WHAT CAN BE DONE BY THE FREE STATES?”—and the self-same spirit that prompted the question, is quick to answer, “NOTHING.” Though the response be false, it is not so strange as the credulity of its echo. From the same ready quarter, we are warned not to interfere with a “*domestic institution*”—a “*local concern*;” and not a few take warning; as if that which grasps everything were itself too sacred to be touched by anything. Slavery, from the establishment of the Union to this hour, has been *the Nation’s concern*. It has always acted upon the General Gov-

ernment, and always used it. He who looks upon Slavery as a mere "local concern," is blind, if not by nature, by choice. And, as its influence is everywhere, other influences should everywhere counteract it.

But we are told, that, to meddle with Slavery is to vex the master, and so to worry the Slave; and, that, if we wish the evil abolished, or even mitigated, we must quietly wait its own good time—for which ages have waited in vain. Doubtless every sin when touched by truth is irritated till resentment is hopeless; and nothing but resolute united pressure will bereave Slavery of hope and calm it to submission. That, in some cases, the master's vexation will harass the Slave, may be looked for, though the general effect is not to be feared. That letting any tyranny alone will persuade it to be gentle and just, and to love its neighbor as itself, is a presumption which nature denies and history disproves. Nothing but pressure from abroad will disturb it at home, for nothing but an external conscience alarms any inveterate sin. In States where Slavery abounds and is generally prevalent, there is no foot-hold for resistance. In such a State power is, of course, in the hands of a few, and those few are the masters, who identify their interests with Slavery. The great influences of wealth, education and office, proceed from them. Their sentiment is public opinion; and public opinion is law; and, if they can but persuade the world abroad to be quiet, they will be sure to hold still whatever is restless at home.

But we have been told, and many verily believe it to this day, that Anti-Slavery movements in the Free States have arrested the progress of humanity, cutting

off the Slave from some hopeful advantages of instruction, and darkening some cheerful glimpses of liberty. They who fall into this delusion forget that ignorance is the very bolt of Slavery and that even a little knowledge would unlock the house of bondage. Such think that the intellectual and moral degradation of the Slave is only an incident that time can remedy. They who so think misread human nature. In no one thing has Slavery a more settled purpose or a more fixed necessity than in its victim's ignorance. It is now more than a hundred years, since, in addition to what takes place of itself, South Carolina enforced mental degradation by penal law. The statute of that Colony, enacted in 1740, with the preamble, "Whereas the having of Slaves taught to write, or suffering them to be employed in writing, may be attended with *much inconvenience*," was only not so honest as that of North Carolina, in the nineteenth century, with the preamble, "Whereas teaching Slaves to read and write *has a tendency to excite dissatisfaction in their minds, and to produce insurrection and rebellion*;" though neither statute conceals the principles, that, to keep the body a Slave, it must be the dungeon of the soul, and, that it is absurd to hope for the elevation of the Slave, as a Slave. Give to the Slaves generally but the privilege of reading in their own tongue the indiscriminate, the ungarbled truths of the Bible, and there would soon be new evidence that "knowledge is power."

How vainly any presume on the mental or moral advancement of the Slave, history does not vaguely teach. Since to care for his mind is to care for his freedom, time goes on by centuries while the mental and moral condition of the Slave stands still. Said

the Rev. Alexander Garden, in 1740, then Rector of St. Philip's Church, Charleston, South Carolina, in a staunch defence of Slaveholders against a Letter addressed to them by the Rev. George Whitfield,— “As to the little or no proper care taken by owners of the souls of their Slaves, it is too sad a truth, and I tremble to think what account they will give of it at the great day.”—“I cannot think so ill of any, as you do of many of them, viz: that on purpose they keep their Slaves ignorant of Christianity. I believe the reason of their being so kept is the want of one certain uniform method of teaching them, and which *I hope will soon be established with success.*” This testimony as to the religious condition of Slaves at that day is unexceptionable. It is the confession of facts so manifest that reluctant lips could not deny them. It admits that the care of their souls was little or none, and that most masters kept their Slaves ignorant of Christianity. The evidence of their *heathenism* at that time, is the best possible. What the learned Rector's “*hope*” was good for, of their speedy change from ignorance to knowledge, they who do not know from the nature of Slavery, may ascertain from the testimony of the Committee appointed in 1833, by the Synod of South Carolina and Georgia, a body nearly all Slaveholders, and comprising the ministers and lay delegates of the Presbyterian churches in those States. Say that Committee, with evident regret that they cannot say otherwise with their abundant opportunities and care to know the truth of what they affirm,—“Who would credit it, that, in these years of revival and benevolent effort, in this Christian Republic, there are over two millions of human beings in the condition of heathen, and in

some respects in a worse condition. From *long continued and close observation* we believe that their moral and religious condition is such that they may justly be considered *the heathen of this Christian country, and will bear comparison with heathen in any country in the world.*" If, then, a marked period of benevolent enterprise and "years" of unusual effort and success in preaching the gospel to others leave the "moral and religious condition" of the Slave unchanged from its extreme debasement; if, indeed, the experiment of nearly a full century finds that degradation changeless, and does but mock the "hope" of early "success," who shall yet dream that other centuries will do more to make a Slave a man, than those which have done so much to make and keep him a brute?

We have yet another word to say as to those *glimpses of liberty* already spoken of, for even now are they successfully appealed to as realities, and sometimes with apparent sincerity. Much stress has been laid on certain symptoms of a jubilee in Virginia in 1830 and 1831, which, as it is said, suddenly disappeared at the coming of the evil genius of Northern interference to alarm the people of that State for their lives. The supposition reflects discredit on the intelligence and moral courage of those who there control public sentiment. They know full well the truth of what Mr. Calhoun had the honesty to avow respecting such pretended opposition to Slavery, when he said,— "The war which the Abolitionists wage against us is of a *very different character*, and far more effective: it is waged, *not against our lives*, but our character:" that is, to make Slaveholding disreputable as a sin. More than this: no Northern Anti-Slavery movement had its beginning or any special impulse at the junc-

ture of the alleged effect, and if the Virginia work of liberty could then begin, after the other movement, why not go on? But if the Anti-Slavery movement had had its beginning or a special impulse at that time, why or how should it arrest the earnest humanity of that State? They who control its affairs and give the key-note to popular feeling could play off an alarm to stir the free States to their foundations; and why could they not make a calm at home as well as raise a tempest abroad? The alleged cause and effect are so unequal that common sense would demand a different explanation of a mere coincidence, if Northern and Virginia zeal for liberty had sprung up so near together. The truth is, that those bewildering glimpses of liberty, so much talked of, came from no sun-light of moral principle. They were but coruscations of a meteor on a troubled sky. At the period spoken of the business of the whole country was deeply dejected. Almost every interest had been suffering, and was then unrelieved. Cotton, the great and ruling product of Slave labor, was everywhere depressed—a losing and, in many instances, a ruinous concern, and Virginia Slaves, instead of being a quick staple, were a drug in the market and an army of devouring locusts at home. In some of the more fertile cotton States new laws were enacted, and obsolete ones revived, inhibiting the inter-state man-traffic, to which Virginia was especially addicted for a portion of her daily bread. While her unmarketable surplus Slaves were already a heavy burden, Slave-breeding, instead of being a profitable abomination, did but increase the weight then pressing hard on her weakness. At this uneasy crisis, the panic of the Southampton massacre, springing from the independ-

ent genius of Nat Turner, occurred to deepen the public sensibility to that “volcano” on which, as a late governor of Virginia has well said, “the master’s mansion always stands in fear,” and on which, we may add, it must always tremble while such a despotism kindles all that is combustible in human nature. At that time there were, also, as there yet are, some irritating free tendencies in Western Virginia. No wonder, then, that, at such a juncture of unwelcome concurrences, there was a solemn pause, and an unusual looking around for relief. But even then, as was then made manifest, the ruling power of Virginia was Slavery, and perhaps never was it more determined to keep its power. It then won an easy victory, and it has ever since kept and used it, both by decisive purpose and by a sudden turn of commercial affairs which more than anything else put out that meteoric light. The rise of cotton and the consequent demand for Slaves to replenish half-worn and supply unworn cotton fields in the newer Slave States, together with the increasing sugar crops of Louisiana, did the work of which, for political ends, Northern interference has been craftily made the accursed scape-goat. The heart of Virginia, which in a season of depression seemed as if it might open, was firmly shut when her hope revived and the sale of her children became her most gainful commerce. The upward price of her tobacco and grain, and a revenue of more than 20,000,000 of dollars in a single year from the sale of her Slaves, were, by all odds, a harder foe to withstand than a distant handful of despised “fanatics.”

Having considered some specious but prominent objections to action on the subject of Slavery, except

where that despotism sets foot on all public question of its character and authority, we now return to the enquiry, — *What can be done by the Free States?*

Despondency can, of course, do nothing but what it has been doing — refuse to help freedom, and let Slavery have its own way. Leaving any sin to take care of itself is to bid it God speed. It is the fault of doing nothing against Slavery that has done so much for it, and if folding of the hands be persisted in a little longer, the sluggard's curse will follow it to that extreme where repentance comes too late. For man in his own secular or moral concerns to wait idly God's time, is to renounce providence and rely on fate. The question should rather be, — *What can not be done*, if those who are in heart opposed to Slavery will at once but use the means and opportunities already theirs, to carry out their hidden idle wishes to an open active issue? The future should be wiser for the past. To look back is to see lost opportunities, which, though they cannot be recalled, may give useful warning not to neglect such as yet remain, or any that may hereafter come. Who does not see, that, when Slavery has enlarged its borders, only a little more and a little deeper moral sense would have circumscribed those limits? Had half as much pains been taken to move as to keep still the Constitutional power of freemen, the Nation had this day been grateful for its well-timed energy. We need not say that the free States have at least the power to confine Slavery within its present limits. All that is wanting is to *use* for that end the power already theirs. To secure its use the moral sense of the people must make that of their agents in those places of trust where questions respecting Slavery are wont to be

settled. The moral sense of the people must be such, by such means as can best make it, that power shall not be put into hands of questionable fidelity to freedom. When so much of duty is done, if done without delay, Slavery will be crippled and its progress hopeless. It may bluster with awful solemnity and forebode with piteous deprecation ; it may threaten to secede from the Union and set up a dark dynasty of its own ; but the attempt, at present, would show its weakness, and in the process it must crumble to pieces. Could it, with present dimensions, succeed in such a project without its own members dropping from its body, it would but isolate itself for more exclusive infamy, with nothing to compensate for unrelieved shame. The threat would be the show of an impotent will, or a gusty passion whose first and last breath are one.

But, it may be asked, — Is this all that freedom can do — restrict the limits of Slavery ? If it were, it would yet be a glorious triumph of humanity, for which all beyond those limits would, in all coming time, lift up grateful hands to the Father of mercies. But who shall stay the foot of truth on her errand for God and man ? Or who shall say that freedom, inspired by truth and urging onward its God-given energies, can do nothing to abridge the limits of Slavery ? Who shall deny its power to abolish that concentration of wrongs and wipe out its blot from the world it so darkly stains ? To the general question, — What can be done ? — a question which sophistry and grosser fraud on the public mind have done so much to perplex — nature and human experience give the answer we briefly subjoin, viz : — TRUTH, BROUGHT

TO BEAR, RESOLUTELY AND PERSEVERINGLY, ON ANY VICTIOUS INTEREST, WILL SUBDUE IT.

There is a constitutional provision for human welfare, established by the beneficent Creator in the social capacity and wants of our race. It may be used for safety, or abused for ruin. What *individual* is wholly proof against popular sentiment? There is in man's nature an unwillingness to be isolated—a dread of being left alone: and this strong universal feeling comes from the whole nature of man, physical, intellectual and moral. To be an alien from the common sentiment, in matters of common interest, is the dreary exile of the mind. Banishment for truth is but a mitigated calamity; for crime, an unrelieved torture. His is an extreme case who never feels the pressure of all-surrounding moral influences. What *community* is insensible to the opinion of the rest of the world? If its own be wrong, it is not the less sensible on that account. Severe is the struggle even for virtue, with God and conscience on its side, to stem for a long season the general tide of corrupt morals. And he who ordained truth as man's friend, did not discourage her vocation by endowing her with impotence. Human nature ceases to be itself when unsusceptible of impressions from either vicious or virtuous communications. All time is replete with evidence that neighboring states and nations assimilate. The present age is accumulating proof that no community is morally independent of its neighbor, while every day is bringing distant countries into practical vicinity. Nations are now moving each other in spite of each other, and foundations of error that have stood fast for ages are breaking up by successive waves of truth rolled in from distant shores.

The God of Nature, in his eternal laws, has made no exception to accommodate the ill will of Slavery to mankind. Let, then, the Christian ministry do its duty, and the churches will not fail to do theirs ; and when their moral power is united in earnest effort, Slavery will respect what it can no longer control. Let the free States unite their civil power, in appropriate ways of its exercise even within the limits of Constitutional law, in favor of "self-evident truth," and self-evident error will do homage to its superior. In advance, Slavery may defy and threaten the whole world ; but when the world and the fullness thereof shall lift up its mighty voice for man, whatever community is against man will find it good to listen and obey, to leave its solitude and come back into the society of mankind.

But with large confidence in these principles, let none go forth to mingle in this great moral contest except in the power of Him who ordained and established them as implements of his all-wise sovereignty. While not forgetting the end, and not neglecting the means, let all invoke the **GREAT FIRST CAUSE** to overrule alike their strength and weakness for the deliverance of the oppressed and the manifestation of his own glory in the good of all.



